

**TOWN/VILLAGE OF NORTHFIELD
JOINT BOARD MEETING
BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN
BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES
Meeting of June 23, 2014**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III (absent), Selectmen Brad Denny, Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois (absent), and Kenneth W. Goslant. Trustee Chair Dennis Donahue (absent), Trustees Kevin T. Beal, K. David Maxwell, and James R. Wilson. Also present were Town Manager Robert Lewis, Acting Village Manager Stephen Fitzhugh, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), Ramon E. Hudson (Road Foreman), Lawton Rutter (Ambulance Chief). Steven Tiersen (Ambulance Service), Meggan McCusker (Ambulance Service), and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Note: in the absence of Chairs John Quinn and Dennis Donahue, Selectman Denny and Trustee Beal will be serving as Acting Chairs for their respective Boards tonight.

Prior to the regular meeting, the Town Selectmen held a Public Hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m. The Town of Northfield, Vermont, is considering making an application to the State of Vermont Community Development Program (DR IG 2012) under the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development Program. The purpose for this Public Hearing is to obtain the views of citizens on community development; to furnish information concerning the amount of funds available and the range of community development activities that may be undertaken under this program; the impact to any historic and archaeological resources that may be affected by the proposed project; and to give affected citizens the opportunity to examine the proposed statement of projected use of these funds. The proposal is to apply for \$68,000 in DR Grant Funds that would be used by the Town of Northfield as its local match portion of a FEMA-funded Tropical Storm Irene disaster project commonly known as the Fairground Road Bridge Replacement Project.

Acting Chair Denny asked if there were any comments or questions regarding this grant application. Manager Lewis stated that holding this Public Hearing was a requirement before the Town could apply for these grant funds. He added that this is a competitive grant and other Vermont communities will be submitting their own applications. Kathleen Lott asked what would happen if Northfield's application is unsuccessful. Manager Lewis stated that the "backup plan" is that Northfield would have to spend its own money to cover the local match amount. Trustee Maxwell asked if this meant that the project was going forward this summer whether the application was successful or not. Manager Lewis confirmed that this was the case.

There being no other comments or questions, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:10 p.m. The Joint Board Meeting began immediately.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Manager Lewis recently learned that a Special Select Board Meeting may need to held before the next regular meeting (07/08/14) so he would like to add this possibility to the "Joint Discussion" section of the agenda. In addition, Kaylan Sweet (O'Maddi's Deli & Café) was supposed to address the Boards tonight under "Public Participation" but is not present.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None.

V. JOINT DISCUSSION

- a. Approval of Minutes: June 11, 2014 (Special Joint Board Meeting).** Motion by Trustee Beal, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-1 with Trustee Wilson abstaining.**
- b. Approval of Bills: Warrant #01-15.** Motion by Trustee Beal, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #01-15 in the amount of \$41,185.72. Acting Chair Denny noted that this warrant has two (2) payments: the bi-annual payment of the Washington County Tax (\$12,240.00) and a bond payment for the completed West Phase of the Water Project (\$28,945.72). Both disbursements are dated July 1, 2014, which is the effective date of municipal merger and this is the reason why the warrant requires approval by both Boards. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**
- c. Approval of FY 2014/2015 Water and Sewer Rates.** Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted that during the budget process there was a consensus that there would be an increase in the water and sewer rates in order to fund upcoming infrastructure improvement projects. However, it was the Boards' intention to phase in these rate increases over the next few years so that the additional monthly increase to the average customer's bill would total no more than \$5.00. The proposed rates would accomplish this as the average residential customer would pay about \$2.50 per month on his/her water bill and about \$2.26 more on the monthly sewer bill. Acting Chair Denny emphasized that these figures applied to residential customers only; there will be a higher percentage increase for commercial water users. Motion by Trustee Wilson, seconded by Trustee Maxwell, to approve the new water and sewer rates and authorize Acting Chair Beal to sign the confirmation form. **Motion passed 3-0-0.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to concur with the Village Trustees' action in approving the new rates. **Motion passed 3-0-0.** Trustee Maxwell would like some research done on how Northfield's rates compare to those in other Vermont municipalities. Manager Fitzhugh stated that direct comparisons may be difficult as each uses its own unique standards in creating a rate structure.

- d. Water System Improvements Projects/Approval of Special Town Meeting Warning: Tuesday, July 29, 2014.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that the State's Revolving Loan Fund financed the engineering phase of this project, which includes installing new water mains on Central Street, Washington Street, and King Street. In addition, the engineers from Phelps Engineering (John Kiernan and Thomas Nesbitt) recommended that stormwater work be done on Central Street at the same time that the new water mains are installed. To pay for the construction phase of this project, a bond vote by Australian Ballot is proposed for Tuesday, July 29, 2014, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Northfield Middle/High School Lobby. The warning has three (3) articles. Article 1 asks Northfield voters to authorize general obligation bonds in the amount of \$1,250,000 "...for the purpose of financing the replacement of water mains on Central Street and Washington Street..." Article 2 asks for bond authorization in the amount of \$950,000 "...for the purpose of financing the replacement of water mains on King Street..." Article 3 asks for bond authorization in the amount of \$100,000 "...for the purpose of financing the replacement of storm drains on Central Street..." Manager Fitzhugh noted that the repayment of the Article 1 and 2 bonds would be done by utility ratepayers. However, Article 3 repayment would come from Highway Department funds and would be financed through tax revenue. Manager Fitzhugh stated that the water mains on Central Street date from 1906 and replacing them would create a stronger link between Northfield's water sources and the water users. The water mains on King Street also are old and this has resulted in very low water pressure. Since the fire hydrants on the street are basically non-functional, replacing the King Street water mains would greatly increase the level of fire protection in the neighborhood. Selectman Goslant asked if there was current legislation that required that new storm drains be installed on Central Street at this time. Manager Fitzhugh said that there was not. However, the engineers estimated that doing the stormwater work as a stand-alone project would cost about \$150,000; having the work done in conjunction with the water main installation would save about a third (\$50,000) of that amount. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve and sign the Special Town Meeting Warning. Selectman Goslant asked if all Northfield voters would vote on Articles 1 and 2 even though only ratepayers would finance repayment. Manager Fitzhugh confirmed that since the Town as a whole would be responsible for bond repayment, all Northfield registered voters can participate. Acting Chair Denny noted that it is the Town Select Board's responsibility to set the municipal water and sewer rates at the proper amounts to fund repayment. Manager Fitzhugh added that having a reliable and safe water supply and delivery system is a benefit to the entire community. The warning wording specifies that an informational meeting regarding this special election will be held on Tuesday, July 22, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library. Acting Chair Beal felt that the different sources for financing these bonds (ratepayers versus taxpayers) should be fully explained at this informational meeting. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- e. Sale of Former Police Station (52 East Street).** Manager Fitzhugh noted that the required thirty (30) day "Notice of Intent to Convey Municipal Real Estate" period expired last Thursday (06/19/14) without any public objection. He now is working to finalize the sale of the two (2) East Street properties to the high bidder (William Lyon) for a combined price of \$35,000.
- f. Town Manager Search Process update.** Acting Chair Beal stated that although he would prefer to discuss the details of this matter later in the meeting in executive session (see below), he can provide a general update at this time in open session. He stated that the process is ongoing and that negotiations are being held with the candidate recommended by the Search Committee. He expected that a new manager will be hired by the end of the week and this will become public information at that time.
- g. Village Common Rehabilitation Project update.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that everything has been completed except that some minor road striping needs to be done, the new lights on the north side need to be connected to a power source, and some ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) work also needs to be finished. He added that Don Weston Excavating did an excellent job in concluding their work far ahead of the required June 27, 2014 completion date. Therefore, although it may seem that the subcontractors are far behind schedule, it only appears that way because much of the other work was done so early. In addition, the fire hydrant on the northwest corner of the Village Common, discussed at the last Village Trustees meeting (06/10/14), will be relocated so that a parking space will not be lost. The Water Department crew will take care of this after completing their work on Jarvis Lane. Also, Manager Fitzhugh has learned that the curbing installed on the north side of Depot Square may look different but was designed to meet ADA requirements. Manager Lewis asked if there were plans to install new trash receptacles that would be in keeping with the new décor. Manager Fitzhugh stated that the post-merger Select Board should be looking into this. Acting Chair Denny recently learned at a workshop that there are new State rules that require that a recycling receptacle be installed adjacent to every trash can. Trustee Maxwell believes that the placement of trash/recycling receptacles on the Village Common should be a Board priority. Acting Chair Denny stated that due to the recent renovation work, the Village Common looks great and thanked all those responsible. Selectman Goslant would still like to see the current restricted weekday parking on Depot Square expanded to additional areas. Trustee Maxwell stated that this would require passage of an ordinance to be enforceable. Trustee Donahue has been exploring this possibility and will present his findings at a future meeting.

- h. LED Streetlight Replacement Project update.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that the control panels have been delivered and the streetlight fixtures should be here early next week. Once they have arrived, the installation contractor will begin work right away. Manager Fitzhugh also has looked into ordering energy efficient lights for the lights on the Village Common interior.
- i. Town/Village Merger Transition update.** Acting Chair Denny noted that merger is now only one (1) week away (07/01/14). In addition, as announced by Police Chief James Dziobek at the last Select Board meeting (06/09/14), the Northfield Police Department (NPD) will be hosting the National Night Out on the Village Common on Tuesday, August 5, 2014. One of the activities that night will be the taking of a "Community Photograph" of all the participants at 7:00 p.m. Acting Chair Denny has met with Chief Dziobek on this matter in order to determine the best location to show off the recent renovations. Free refreshments will be provided and Acting Chair Denny strongly encouraged everyone who can attend to do so and thereby demonstrate their enthusiasm for the newly merged community (i.e. "One Northfield").
- j. DRAFT Solid Waste Control Ordinances.** Manager Lewis noted that the two (2) separate draft ordinances were distributed in the last packets. He has not been contacted since by any Board members with questions or comments. He now asked if there was any preference between the two. Acting Chair Beal favored the second draft, which had used the Town of Randolph's "Solid Waste and Junkyard Ordinance" as a template. However, he would favor postponing any further discussion until a future meeting so that the full Select Board and the new Town Manager can be involved. Trustee Maxwell asked what led to this coming before the Boards at this time. Manager Lewis stated that he has received numerous complaints about old furniture and other junk sitting on front lawns for prolonged amounts of time. Manager Fitzhugh also has heard from homeowners who would like to sell their properties but are concerned that their neighbors' junk yards would either make sale impossible or significantly lower their selling price. Trustee Maxwell asked if the ordinance would also apply to commercial properties. Manager Lewis confirmed that it would. Selectman Goslant suggested that this might have been a sticking point in the past. Trustee Maxwell asked who would enforce the ordinance. Manager Lewis said that NPD officers would issue tickets when necessary even though this would not be a high priority for them. Trustee Maxwell would favor such an ordinance provided that it is enforced properly. He added that the Town of Roxbury considered a similar ordinance in recent years and it became a very heated issue. This matter will be on the next agenda.
- k. Economic Development Committee Meeting: Wednesday, June 25, 2014.** Manager Lewis stated that the meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street). Sixty (60) letters went out to commercial property owners asking them to participate in a special forum that night.
- l. Possible Special Select Board Meeting.** Manager Lewis stated that the Town's attorneys would like to meet with the Select Board to discuss a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment that was performed at 11 Wall Street as well as the possible need for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment. This can either be done at a Special Select Board Meeting on Wednesday, July 2, 2014 or it can wait until the next regular meeting (07/08/14). It was noted that the Community Room has already been reserved by the Planning Commission that night (07/02/14) in order to hold a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Municipal Plan. The consensus of the Board members was to wait until the next regular meeting.

VI. BOARD OF TOWN SELECTMEN

- a. Approval of Minutes: June 9, 2014 (Regular Meeting).** Since there was not a quorum of Town Selectmen present who attended this meeting, action on this item will be tabled.
- b. Approval of Bills: Warrant #25-14.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve Warrant #25-14 in the amount of \$107,661.44. Selectman Goslant asked if the repairs to the NPD vehicles were performed by the Town Mechanic. Manager Lewis confirmed that they were; he has issued a directive to that effect. Selectman Goslant noted several payments for "Special Articles." Manager Lewis stated that these were for articles approved by voters at the 2013 Town Meeting to support non-profit organizations; the Town makes the payments all at the same time at the end of the fiscal year. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- c. Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through June 8, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$51,966.23. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- d. Capital Expense Note (2014 Ambulance Unit).** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve and sign the Capital Expense Note in the amount of \$84,850 at 1.24% interest for the purchase of a 2014 Ambulance Unit; to approve and sign the Capital Expense Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. Members of the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) had parked the new vehicle in the parking lot outside the Community Room before the meeting so that the Board members could inspect it in person. It was agreed by all that it was a very impressive piece of machinery. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- e. **Authorization to Sell Used 2003 Ambulance Unit to High Bidder.** The Select Board previously had authorized the NAS to sell this used vehicle through the sealed bid process. Manager Lewis reported that four (4) bids had received by the deadline (06/12/14) and that the highest bid was \$5,608.88. He now would like the Select Board to provide NAS Chief Lawton Rutter with the authorization to sell the vehicle to the high bidder. Selectman Goslant believes that the bids received were far too low and should be rejected. He felt that the vehicle's chassis and motor were in good condition and warranted a higher selling price. Chief Rutter stated that Blue Book prices for ambulance units are unreliable given the high mileage and prolonged idling time that the vehicles endure. This unit has over 90,000 miles on it so Chief Rutter was not too surprised by the bid amounts received. Selectman Goslant still feels that the bids should be rejected and the vehicle either should be rebid or kept and reutilized by the Town. Trustee Maxwell asked who would pay more than the high bid amount already received. Selectman Goslant has spoken to someone who would be willing to pay more and he does not want to see taxpayer money wasted by accepting an unacceptable amount. Chief Lawton stated that he has seen similar used Ambulance units sold for prices both higher and lower than the current high bid. He would favor selling the unit at this time to the high bidder. Acting Chair Beal sees no value in holding onto the vehicle; if someone really wanted to pay more for it, he/she would have put in a formal bid before the advertised deadline. Trustee Wilson asked who this potential bidder was. Selectman Goslant did not feel that he could publically give his/her name. Manager Lewis stated that although the Boards always retained the right to reject any and all bids, this would require that the whole process begin over again. Acting Chair Denny is concerned that if the vehicle is put out to bid again there is no guarantee that the bids will be higher the next time. In fact, the current high bidder may decide not to take part at all. Manager Lewis believes that possible re-purpose of the vehicle was discussed during the budget process and had been rejected. He also believed that the option of rejecting all bids should be reserved for when the bids received are considerably below what had been expected and/or there is some suspicion of collusion between potential bidders. He does not think that this situation exists here and he is concerned that the integrity of the Town's bid process may be brought into question. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to reject all bids and re-advertise the Ambulance unit for sale through the sealed bid process. Selectman Doney would like the advertisement rewritten to indicate that the vehicle can be used for purposes other than as an Ambulance unit. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- f. **Approval of Ambulance Bill Abatements.** Finance Director Laurie Baroffio has asked the Select Board to abate \$26,963.82 in uncollected Ambulance bills dating back to June 2011. This amount includes bills for deceased patients, those for people who have declared bankruptcy, and those that our contracted collection agency has not been able to resolve for over a year. She added that the Select Board budgets each year for the estimated amounts needed to cover such bad debts. Selectman Goslant asked why surviving family members don't pay the bills of their deceased relatives. Ms. Baroffio stated that although bills are sent out to next of kin there is no legal obligation for them to pay. Trustee Maxwell asked how well the Town did in collecting on Ambulance bills. Ms. Baroffio stated that the collection rate usually is around ninety percent (90%). She added that the Town employs a collection agency but it has collected only \$4,000 over the past few years. By contract, the collection agency retained twenty-five percent (25%) of that amount. Selectman Goslant asked Ms. Baroffio if she is confident that the \$26,963.82 is uncollectable. Ms. Baroffio is convinced that the Town of Northfield can do no more to collect. Acting Chair Denny noted that many of the bills on the list were partially paid, which indicates that some people paid as much as they could. Ms. Baroffio stated that the Town does work with people so that they can spread out their payments. Some of the unpaid bills were for numerous Ambulance calls for the same patient. Selectman Goslant asked if this matter could be postponed until the next regular meeting. Ms. Baroffio said that was possible but it would push resolution of these debts into the next fiscal year. Acting Chair Denny saw no need for delay as these bills were clearly uncollectable. Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the recommended Ambulance abatements in the amount of \$26,963.82. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- g. **Status Report: Various Projects.** The Town Selectmen had nothing to add.

VII. BOARD OF VILLAGE TRUSTEES

- a. **Approval of Minutes: June 10, 2014 (Regular Meeting).** Since there was not a quorum of Village Trustees present who attended this meeting, action on this item will be tabled.
- b. **Approval of Bills: Warrant #25-14.** Motion by Trustee Wilson, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve Warrant #25-14 in the amount of \$52,178.47. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Utility Account Abatements.** Manager Fitzhugh noted that the utility abatements are divided into two (2) categories: those that the collection agency has marked "account inactive" (\$11,279.06) and those "with small balance and/or no available address" (\$18.15). He added that these were all electric bills and covered a two (2) year period. Trustee Maxwell asked what was the Northfield Electric Department's annual revenue. Ms. Baroffio said it was about \$4,000,000. Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Wilson, to abate the inactive accounts in the amount of \$11,279.06. **Motion passed 3-0-0.** Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Wilson, to abate the small balance account in the amount of \$18.15. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

- d. **Petition for Water Bill Waiver.** Manager Fitzhugh stated that a Water Department customer has asked for a waiver on a \$1,142.26 water bill that was the result of a faulty meter. The customer's normal water bill is about \$50. The sewer charge related to this meter failure already had been abated. Due to a lack of motion, the petition request failed. Acting Chair Beal would like the Utility Department to contact the customer and establish a payment plan.
- e. **Status Reports: Various Projects.** The Village Trustees had nothing to add.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Sale of Used Ford 550.** Selectman Goslant noted in Manager Lewis' previous report that this used vehicle was sold for \$8,500 instead of the \$15,000 that had been projected during the budget process. Road Foreman Ramon Hudson stated that the vehicle has not been sold or even advertised for sale. The vehicle still needs to be "cleaned up" before being put on the market.
- b. **New Cell Tower.** Selectman Goslant asked if there is going to be a new cell tower in Northfield. Manager Fitzhugh stated that AT&T is proposing to build a new cell tower but he has no details.
- c. **Demolished Water Street Properties.** Selectman Goslant asked if it were possible to retain the old water pipes from the flood-damaged structures demolished through the FEMA buyout process. He thought that they could be re-used to supply a water fountain should the site be turned into a community park as has been proposed. Manager Fitzhugh stated that the old pipes had been in very bad shape and could not be re-purposed. New waterlines to the proposed park would have to be installed in order to meet health and safety standards.
- d. **Town Manager Lewis.** Selectman Goslant noted that since this was Manager Lewis' final meeting before his retirement, he wanted to thank him for his many contributions to Northfield during his tenure. The other Board members then joined in expressing their gratitude.

IX. MANAGERS' REPORTS

- a. **Village Manager Fitzhugh.**
 - 1. **FCC License.** Manager Fitzhugh reported that the Water Department has received its temporary FCC license. The application for a permanent license is ongoing.
- b. **Town Manager Lewis.** Manager Lewis had nothing to add to his written report other than to state that it has been a privilege to serve as Northfield Town Manager these past three (3) years. The department heads here are the finest that he has worked with during his career in municipal management and this has resulted in many significant achievements. Acting Chair Beal stated that Manager Lewis is always welcome to visit us here in Northfield.
 - 1. **Legal Matter Expenses.** Trustee Maxwell stated that since the two Boards will merge next week and he will become a Town Selectmen at that time, he would like additional background information concerning a legal matter that appears to have dragged on for some time and incurred large attorney fees. He would like to know what the Town has or will gain from this. Manager Lewis confirmed that the legal fees have been increasing but he hoped that the next property foreclosure will cover a good portion of these expenses.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Non-agenda items. There was none.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Wilson, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a personnel matter with Manager Fitzhugh present. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The Boards went into executive session at 9:54 p.m.

Motion by Trustee Maxwell, seconded by Trustee Wilson, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The Boards came out of executive session at 10:10 p.m. No action was taken.

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to adjourn. **Motion passed 6-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

These minutes are subject to approval at the next regular meeting.

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.